

May 18, 2009

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia: Access to quality, affordable health care is critical to the well-being of all Americans today and in the future. We are seeing millions of Americans suffering from illnesses that could have easily been prevented with basic preventive health care, but people did not seek that care because they didn't have health insurance. In fact, 46 million Americans lack health insurance, and tens of millions more lack health coverage during some part of the year.

In these tough economic times, we must seek to provide universal health care and must seek to reduce the cost of health care insurance, especially for children and pregnant women. We also must address other health concerns, such as the health disparity that exists between racial and ethnic minorities and the need to fund cutting-edge research to find cures for diseases.

We also need to strengthen the Medicaid and Medicare systems and give patients the tools needed to challenge the decisions of all health insurers. Only through action in these critical issues can we meet the pressing health care needs of our Nation.

Providing health care for all and reducing the costs of health care will relieve the financial strain on all families and businesses. It will also go a long way to addressing the racial disparities in health indicators in this country because minorities, as it's already been said, are less likely to be covered by health insurance than others.

On child health, one of the first actions of this Congress was the passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program, the SCHIP, where we were able to provide coverage for 7 million children already covered by SCHIP, plus an additional 4 million more. While this was a good step in the right direction, it is not enough, because 5 million children are still left without health insurance.

That's why I introduced legislation that would provide health insurance for all children, the All Healthy Children Act, which was endorsed by the Children's Defense Fund as a logical, achievable, and incremental next step to closing the child health coverage gap. This proposal

would ensure that all children and pregnant women are covered by expanding the coverage of both Medicaid and the SCHIP programs by eliminating the procedural red tape that currently prevents them from being covered by either program. This comprehensive program will include all basic health care coverage, as well as coverage for mental health, prenatal, and well-child care.

Mr. Speaker, our health care system is unfortunately riddled with inefficiencies, excessive administrative expenses, inflated prices, poor management, and inappropriate care and waste. These problems significantly increase the cost of medical care and health insurance for employers and workers and affect the security of the financial security of our families. We all know that reforming health care is not going to be easy, but we have a good opportunity now to finally reform the health care system by cutting costs, protecting families from bankruptcy or debt because of medical costs, investing in prevention and wellness, and improving patient safety and quality of care.

We have taken the first step in reforming our health care system by passing a Federal budget for fiscal year 2010 that includes more than \$630 billion to establish a reserve fund to finance fundamental health care reform that will first bring down health care costs and then expand coverage.

The budget does a number of things. It accelerates the adoption of health care information technology and expansion of electronic health records.

The budget expands research comparing the effectiveness of medical treatments to give patients and physicians better information on what works best.

It invests over \$6 billion for cancer research at the National Institutes of Health as part of the administration's multiyear commitment to double cancer research funding.

It strengthens the Indian health system, which sustained investments in health care services for American Indians and Alaska Natives to address persistent health disparities and foster healthy Indian communities.

It invests \$330 million to increase the number of physicians, nurses, and dentists practicing in areas of the country experiencing shortages of health professionals.

It supports families by providing additional funding for affordable, high-quality child care, expanding Early Head Start and Head Start, and creating the Nurse Home Visitation program to support first-time mothers.

It strengthens the Medicare program by encouraging high quality and efficient care and improving program integrity.

And finally, it invests over \$1 billion for Food and Drug Administration food safety efforts to increase and improve inspections, domestic surveillance, laboratory capacity, and initiatives to prevent and control food-borne illnesses.

Mr. Speaker, for years we've been at a stalemate in Congress and haven't been able to enact real health care reform. As a Nation, we are already spending more on health care than any other Nation. We spend a higher percentage of our GDP. We spend a higher amount per capita, and yet by any measure, by any of the health indicators, we are still in poor health, and we still suffer from significant disparities in different parts of our population.

So we're already paying for health care. What we need to do under the present administration and Congress is to finally do more than talk about health care reform and actually do something about it.